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Open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group
on a permanent forum for indigenous people
Geneva, 15-19 February 1999

Proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people

Information from indigenous organizations

In its resolution 1998/20 of 9 April 1998, the Commission on Human Rights decided to establish an open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group to elaborate and consider further proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations system. The Commission requested the ad hoc working group to take into account in its work the comments received from indigenous organizations. The present document contains information received from indigenous organizations as of 16 December 1998. Any further information from indigenous organizations will be made available in addenda to the present document.

GE.99-40057 (E)

NEPAL FEDERATION OF NATIONALITIES

[4 November 1998]
[Original: English]

FIRST ASIAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' WORKSHOP ON A PERMANENT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE UNITED NATIONS

INDORE DECLARATION

We the representatives of indigenous peoples meeting in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India, from 23 to 25 September, 1998,

Bearing in mind the United Nations resolutions and declarations pertaining to the rights of indigenous peoples, including those in relation to the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system,

Recalling the rights of all peoples, including indigenous peoples, to self-determination as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,

Reiterating our demand for the early adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as adopted by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities,

Bearing in mind the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action as adoption by the World Conference on Human Rights,

Recalling that the goal of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People is to strengthen international cooperation in order to solve problems faced by indigenous peoples in such areas as human rights, health, environment, development, education and culture,

Supporting United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/157 calling for the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system as one of the important objectives of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples,

Recalling the Secretary-General's report on the review of existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the United Nations concerning indigenous peoples (A/51/493),

Supporting the Declarations of the First and Second International Indigenous Conference on a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations system held in Temuco, Chile (see E/CN.4/1998/11/Add.1), and Kuna Yala, Panama (see E/CN.4/1998/11/Add.3),

Recalling the reports of the first and second workshops on a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations system held in Copenhagen, Denmark (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1995/7) and Santiago de Chile (E/CN.4/1998/11),

Welcoming the decision of the Commission on Human Rights to establish an ad hoc inter-sessional working group on the permanent forum,

Emphasizing the need for an indigenous co-chair for the ad hoc inter-sessional working group on the permanent forum,

We call for the speedy establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system in order to facilitate dialogue between States Members of the United Nations, indigenous peoples and United Nations bodies on issues and concerns affecting indigenous peoples.

Level

The permanent forum should be at the highest level and no lower than a body reporting directly to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.

Mandate

The mandate of the permanent forum should be as broad as possible and contain all matters concerning indigenous peoples amongst which should be included civil, political, economic, social, cultural, developmental, environmental, health, education, language, land, resources, territorial, gender and children's rights. In particular, it should deal with the following, among others:

To coordinate and monitor all activities of concern to indigenous peoples within and outside the United Nations system;

To provide advice and guidance to States Members of the United Nations, specialized agencies of the United Nations and other relevant bodies;

To facilitate the establishment of national institutions and mechanisms on the rights of indigenous peoples;

To conduct research into and collect, provide and disseminate information on the conditions and needs of indigenous peoples and on the United Nations institutions, agencies and related forums which concern indigenous peoples;

To promote understanding between peoples with the aim of facilitating the prevention, and the peaceful resolution, of conflicts;

To formulate recommendations on any issues of concern to indigenous peoples;

To ensure the fulfilment of existing national and international standards with regard to the rights of indigenous peoples;

To develop international standards on the rights of indigenous peoples;

To take decisions for intervening effectively on an urgent basis on behalf of indigenous peoples throughout the world.

Membership, composition and participation

The forum should be composed of an equal number of representatives of indigenous peoples and States Members of the United Nations, acting as full voting members on an equal basis. There should be at least two representatives of indigenous peoples from each of the main geographical regions around the world, to be nominated by indigenous peoples of the respective regions.

In addition, indigenous peoples and their organizations, States Members of the United Nations, specialized agencies of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, should be able to participate in the deliberations of the forum as observers without the right to vote. Indigenous peoples should have the same access to the forum as to the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

Secretariat

A new secretariat should be established for the permanent forum. This secretariat should be adequately staffed by qualified indigenous persons for the preparation and servicing of the permanent forum meetings and the collection and dissemination of information. The secretariat should also assist indigenous peoples in their capacity-building efforts.

Financing

The funds for the functioning of the forum and its subsidiary bodies, including a secretariat, should come from the United Nations regular budget. Additionally, States Members of the United Nations should be encouraged to contribute with voluntary funds and technical assistance.

SAAMI COUNCIL

[17 December 1998]
[Original: English]

ARCTIC INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DECLARATION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS

We, the Arctic indigenous peoples' representatives meeting in Geneva on 10 December 1998,

Bearing in mind the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace,

Recalling that the World Conference on Human Rights urged States to ensure the full and free participation of indigenous peoples in all aspects of society, in particular in matters of concern to them,

Recalling also the recommendation of the World Conference on Human Rights to the United Nations concerning the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations system,

Referring to Article 68 of the Charter of the United Nations, in which it is stated that the Economic and Social Council shall set up commissions in economic and social fields and for the promotion of human rights, and such other commissions as may be required for the performance of its functions,

Recalling further that the goal of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People is to strengthen international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous peoples in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health, and that the theme of the Decade is "indigenous peoples - partnership in action",

Bearing in mind the review of the Secretary-General on the existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the United Nations concerning indigenous peoples, in which it is stated that there are no mechanisms to ensure regular exchange of information and views between Governments, indigenous peoples and the United Nations system on an ongoing basis,

Emphasizing that the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 50/157 has identified the establishment of a permanent forum before the end of the Decade as one of the main objectives of the Decade,

Supporting the declarations of the First and Second International Indigenous Conferences on the Establishment of a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations System held in Temuco, Chile, and Kuna Yala, Panama, respectively, and the declaration of the First Asian Indigenous Peoples' Workshop on a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples in the United Nations held in Indore, India,

Call for the swift establishment of a high-level permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations.

Mandate and terms of reference

1. The overall goal of the Permanent Forum should be to promote peace and prosperity in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, by developing friendly relations among nations and peoples based on respect for the principle of equal rights. It should be a forum for dialogue between Governments, indigenous peoples and the United Nations system on issues affecting indigenous peoples.

2. The mandate of the Permanent Forum should enable it to deal effectively with the full range of issues covered by the mandate of the Economic and Social Council which are of concern to indigenous peoples. The Permanent Forum's mandate should include, but not be limited to, the submission of proposals, recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council and coordination of all matters pertaining to indigenous peoples. It should also be authorized to call upon and establish ad hoc working groups in specialized fields or individual experts if and when necessary.

Level

3. The Permanent Forum should report directly to its parent body, the Economic and Social Council.

Membership

4. The Permanent Forum should be composed of an equal number of representatives of indigenous peoples and Governments, acting as full voting members on an equal basis. Members of the Permanent Forum should be chosen for a period of four years.

Participation

5. Indigenous peoples, communities and organizations, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and organs. Indigenous peoples should be able to participate in the work of the Permanent Forum regardless of consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

Experts

6. Individual experts should be allowed to participate in the work of the Permanent Forum if or when called upon by the Forum.

Financing

7. The Permanent Forum, including its potential subsidiary bodies, should be funded via the regular budget of the United Nations.

Secretariat

8. A new and separate secretariat of the Permanent Forum, funded via the United Nations regular budget, should be established well in advance of the first session of the Forum. The secretariat should be led and staffed by indigenous persons.

ASSOCIATION TO COORDINATE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN EL SALVADOR

[28 November 1998]
[Original: SPANISH]

Comments

1. We agree with the establishment of the permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system. It must be an example of the unity, equality and participation of all parties, for human rights cannot be guaranteed as long as inequalities exist.

2. The establishment of the permanent forum should have a positive impact on construction and development for indigenous peoples in areas such as economic, political, social and cultural rights, human rights, the environment, health and the expansion of cross-cultural bilingual education based on the world view of the indigenous peoples in each State.

3. The permanent forum should ensure that indigenous peoples take part fully in, and actually benefit from, the formulation of projects so that the quality of such projects may be improved in our territories.

4. The establishment of the permanent forum must not be limited to the creation of documentation and communication centres, but must, rather, promote the exercise and expansion of the rights of indigenous peoples in all areas; it must fully promote a culture of rights and solidarity involving participation by and consultation with indigenous peoples.

5. The permanent forum should lead to the genuine recognition of indigenous associations within the United Nations so that they might have the right to participate at all levels.

6. The permanent forum should be a body designed to facilitate the training of indigenous persons in various occupations.

7. It must relate to measures concerning the obligations of States to protect and respect indigenous lands and to protect the environment.

KIRAT KOYU RAIS UPLIFTING ASSOCIATION

[25 November 1998]
[Original: English]

1. KKRUA/Nepal would like to express great satisfaction upon the establishment of an open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group on the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/20 of 9 April 1998. KKRUA/Nepal wishes the working group all the best and every success in its work.

2. KKRUA/Nepal highly appreciates the two workshops hosted by the Governments of Denmark (1996) and Chile (1997) and supports the report (recommendation) of the second Workshop on a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations system held in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/30.

3. KKRUA/Nepal welcomes with profound satisfaction the review of the Secretary-General on the existing mechanism, procedures and programmes within the United Nations system concerning indigenous peoples (A/51/493).

4. KKRUA/Nepal also welcomes with satisfaction the views contained in the contribution made by the Chairperson of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, Mrs. Erica-Irene Daes (E/CN.4/1998/11/Add.2).

5. As its comments, KKRUA/Nepal supports the "Outline of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples" presented by the Government of Denmark (see E/CN.4/1998/11/Add.1). But KKRUA/Nepal suggests that the geographical regions should be composed as follows: (a) Africa; (b) Asia; (c) Circumpolar region and the Pacific; (d) North America; (e) South America. KKRUA/Nepal is of the opinion that the majority of indigenous peoples are located in the Asian region so this region alone must have one representative member representing its indigenous peoples.

6. In regard to the definition of "indigenous peoples", KKRUA/Nepal supports the view of the Saami Council, point 14, contained in the statement submitted by the Council (see E/CN.4/1998/11/Add.1). For the time being, the working definition of Mr. Martínez Cobo is appropriate.

7. KKRUA/Nepal unconditionally and fully supports the "Draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples" prepared and adopted by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and expresses its view that the draft declaration should be adopted as soon as possible within the second half of the International Decade. KKRUA/Nepal urges the higher bodies concerned to take positive and prompt measures in this regard.

8. KKRUA/Nepal also supports the recommendation made by the Asian workshop on the permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system recently held in Indore, India.

9. KKRUA/Nepal is of the opinion that the proposed permanent forum should be established within the International Decade, as a major action of the Decade, which will, of course, be fruitful to us, the indigenous peoples, and really prove to be a major "clearing house" between the indigenous peoples and the international community.

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Proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people

Information from indigenous organizations

In its resolution 1998/20 of 9 April 1998, the Commission on Human Rights decided to establish an open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group to elaborate and consider further proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations system. The Commission requested the ad hoc working group to take into account in its work the comments received from indigenous organizations. The present document contains information received from indigenous organizations as of 6 January 1999. Any further information from indigenous organizations will be made available in addenda to the present document.

LEGAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT
OF PEOPLES OF ANDEAN ORIGIN (CAPAJ)

[6 January 1999]
[Original: Spanish]

1. Since 1980 the Working Group on Indigenous Populations has been drawing attention to the need to establish a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system, and in 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights included the establishment of a forum of this nature in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Accordingly, in 1995 and 1997, two workshops were held, one in Copenhagen and the other in Santiago de Chile; two indigenous conferences were also organized on the subject in respect of the Kuna and Mapuche peoples, at which the feasibility of establishing a permanent forum was thoroughly discussed.

2. In 1996, the Secretary-General reached the conclusion that there was no decision-making body in the United Nations system responsible for examining allegations by indigenous peoples of violations of their fundamental rights. Nor does the United Nations have any regulatory machinery that takes action on specific indigenous matters.

3. Our organization deeply regrets the absence of a permanent forum because, since 1995, it has been submitting to the High Commissioner for Human Rights complaints by the Aymara people living in Peru, Chile and Bolivia concerning the spoliation of their territorial waters and, consequently, the danger of extinction; so far, however, no progress has been made in preventing such action on account of the absence of a suitable forum which could solve this problem in a competent fashion.

1. Mandate

4. We are of the opinion that the workshops and conferences held on the subject of the permanent forum reveal a consensus in favour of endowing the permanent forum with competence in respect not only of the cultural, economic, social and political rights of the indigenous peoples but also educational and health matters affecting the indigenous peoples, with a view to promoting better services corresponding to their way of life. The forum should seek to foster the self-development of the indigenous peoples in a healthy environment on their own territory.

5. Our organization considers that this forum should enjoy decision-making powers and be authorized to take any action required to solve the various problems faced by the indigenous peoples in the above-mentioned spheres, as well as to prevent genocide and cultural ethnocide, and thereby enable the indigenous peoples fully to enjoy and exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms.

2. Level

6. The permanent forum could be established either at the General Assembly or Economic and Social Council level. Article 68 of the United Nations Charter authorizes the Council to set up any commissions that may be required

for the performance of its functions. In point of fact, the Economic and Social Council has four types of subsidiary organs, namely, the functional commissions, standing committees, regional commissions and expert bodies. The General Assembly, for its part, has four kinds of subsidiary bodies: the Main Committees, the General Committee, the Credentials Committee and Permanent Committees. It would be feasible to establish the permanent forum at the same level as the bodies mentioned above.

3. Composition and membership

7. The proposals submitted reveal a consensus in favour of quadripartite membership of the permanent forum, in other words, it should comprise representatives of Governments, delegates of indigenous peoples, experts and specialized agencies, all with the right to speak and vote, and each one represented on an equal footing by six representatives. The composition of the permanent forum should be such as to ensure that it is a competent and efficient body which has sufficient authority to protect and promote the rights of the indigenous peoples and with which the indigenous peoples are associated intimately and not simply as observers.

4. The present context

8. The context in which the permanent forum for indigenous people is being established in the United Nations should be taken into account. Ongoing discussions of the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, the study of treaties, the study on the patrimony of the indigenous people and the study of indigenous land rights all constitute a reference framework for the permanent forum.

9. The fundamental rights of the indigenous people which are to be embodied in the declaration will require adequate, fair and genuine implementation; the same is true of any new elements that may emerge from the studies mentioned above.

10. The various problems faced at the present time by indigenous peoples vary to such an extent that the establishment of the permanent forum is an urgent necessity, since it will have to evolve in the same way as the United Nations itself.

COORDINATING BODY FOR INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS OF THE AMAZONIAN BASIN (COICA)

[4 January 1999]
[Original: Spanish]

1. COICA is a regional organization that represents about 400 Amazonian indigenous peoples comprising approximately 1.5 million persons living in Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, French Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela. We wish to express our support for resolution 1998/20 of 9 April 1998, by which the Commission on Human Rights decided to set up an open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group to consider proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system.

2. First, we would invite this working group to take into account the resolutions and declarations of the United Nations, as well as those submitted by indigenous people in connection with the establishment of the permanent forum:

(a) The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, emphasizing the need for a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system;

(b) General Assembly resolution 50/157, which states that one of the important objectives of the Decade of the World's Indigenous People is the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations;

(c) The Secretary-General's review of the existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the United Nations concerning indigenous people, which concludes by stating that there are virtually no mechanisms in the United Nations which give the indigenous peoples an opportunity to participate in decisions that may influence their lives (A/51/493);

(d) The report of the first workshop on the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system, held pursuant to Commission resolution 1995/30 in Copenhagen from 26 to 28 June 1995 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1995/7);

(e) The Declaration of the First International Indigenous Conference on a Permanent Forum for Indigenous People within the United Nations system, Temuco, Chile, 6 to 9 May 1997;

(f) The report of the second workshop on a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations system held in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/30 at Santiago de Chile, from 30 June to 2 July 1997 (E/CN.4/1998/11 and Add.1 to 3);

(g) The Declaration of the Second International Indigenous Conference on a Permanent Forum for Indigenous People held at Ukupseni, Kuna Yala, Panama from 4 to 6 March 1998 (E/CN.4/1998/11/Add.3);

(h) The Indore Declaration of the First Asian Indigenous Peoples Workshop on a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples in the United Nations, held at Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India, from 23 to 25 September 1998.

3. Secondly, we would emphasize that it is important that the United Nations system should provide adequate financial resources that would permit indigenous participation in the working group.

THE ASSOCIATION OF NORFOLK ISLANDERS

[4 January 1999]
[Original: English]

United Nations and indigenous peoples

1. The need for a permanent forum within the United Nations has been identified from the limited scope of United Nations activities within relevant programmes and policies. To date, there also exist a lack of recognition of indigenous people and a lack of national and international representation, and a failure to address issues relevant to indigenous peoples in the areas of human rights, land rights, property rights and the right to self-determination.

Membership and participation

2. Membership of the permanent forum could be broken down into member and observer status. It is necessary to ensure that this permanent forum avoids duplication of the activities of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Each should function distinctly and collaborate in mutual objectives.

3. A permanent forum of 34 members would allow equal membership of 12 governmental and 12 indigenous representatives, 5 members from specialized agencies, inter alia, United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, and a representative of the International Labour Organization. The rest should be experts on indigenous affairs representing each region of the world.

4. It is crucial to the success of the forum for the status quo to remain with regard to a definition of indigenous people. While a definition on the national level may be a necessity for some Governments to promulgate rights and laws, to apply definitions on an international level may serve to exclude certain indigenous people and lead to a loss of credibility of a permanent forum. The Martínez Cobo report, the Special Rapporteur of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the ILO and the World Bank have a broad definition that encompasses the diversity of indigenous people worldwide.

Mandate and terms of reference

5. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the goal of the permanent forum should be to promote peace, develop friendly relations and promote understanding among peoples

6. The permanent forum should be established as a subsidiary of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and should be developed with the full range of operational activities covered by the ECOSOC mandate which are of concern to indigenous people.

7. The suggested mandate and functions of Mrs. Erica-Irene Daes, Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group (see E/CN.4/1998/11/Add.2) would produce an effective base to create credibility, provide coordination and facilitate communication between Governments and indigenous peoples.

8. The Association of Norfolk Islanders notes and appreciates the efforts and progress made at the Copenhagen and Santiago workshops.

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Proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people

Information from non-governmental organizations

In its resolution 1998/20 of 9 April 1998, the Commission on Human Rights decided to establish an open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group to elaborate and consider further proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations system. The Commission requested the ad hoc working group to take into account in its work the comments received from indigenous and non-governmental organizations. The present document contains information received from a non-governmental organization. Any further information from indigenous or non-governmental organizations will be made available in addenda to the present document.

INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

[22 January 1999]
[Original: English]

The Arusha Declaration on the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples Within the United Nations

We the indigenous representatives from Africa, meeting in Arusha, Tanzania,

Recalling the recommendation from the World Conference on Human Rights pertaining to the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations,

Bearing in mind that the goal of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004) is to strengthen international cooperation in order to solve problems faced by indigenous peoples,

Recalling that the General Assembly has identified the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations as one of the major objectives of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People,

Supporting existing indigenous declarations on the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples, in particular the Temuco, Kuna Yala, Indore and Arctic indigenous declarations,

We call for a speedy creation of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations;

The permanent forum should be established at the highest possible level within the United Nations, and no lower than at the level of the Economic and Social Council;

Indigenous peoples and Governments should be members of the permanent forum, with the right to vote. An equal number of indigenous and governmental representatives should be elected as members for a period of four years;

Indigenous organizations, communities and peoples and Governments that are not members of the forum, should, together with non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and individual experts be invited to participate as observers at the meetings of the permanent forum;

The mandate of the permanent forum should be broad enough to cover the concerns of indigenous peoples, including cultural, civil, political and economic rights, health issues, the rights of women and children, education, development, the environment, human rights and conflict prevention and resolution;

The creation of the permanent forum, and its activities, should be funded through the regular budget of the United Nations; and

A separate secretariat should be created for the permanent forum, staffed by qualified indigenous persons.

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PROPOSALS FOR THE POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Information from Governments

In its resolution 1998/20, the Commission on Human Rights decided to establish an open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group to elaborate and consider further proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations system. The Commission requested the ad hoc working group to take into account in its work the comments received from Governments, indigenous and non-governmental organizations. The present document contains information received from a Government. Any further information from Governments, indigenous or non-governmental organizations will be made available in the addenda to the present document.

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SWITZERLAND

[11 January 1999]
[Original: French]

1. Switzerland is in favour of the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations system.

2. Indeed, the appropriate consideration of all matters relating to indigenous peoples requires the creation of a suitable forum for discussion, as provided for in the Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights held at Vienna. That is why Switzerland has, since 1993, supported the idea of a permanent body that would serve as a forum for the representatives of indigenous peoples, the non-governmental organizations concerned and States.

3. This permanent body would enable the various representatives mentioned above to discuss together questions of concern to them in this area. These questions could thus be addressed globally, taking into account existing interrelationships between the problems faced by the indigenous peoples. The protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, the prevention of conflicts, measures to curb all forms of poverty and discrimination, the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development and the protection of the natural environment all speak in favour of the rapid establishment of a body of this nature. This body would offer the indigenous peoples a window on the world, enabling them to assert their rights, whether civil, cultural, economic, political or social, before the international community. Indigenous representatives could thus use this forum to coordinate their actions in all areas of concern to them within the United Nations.

4. Switzerland emphasizes that it is most important that the mandates of this permanent forum, on the one hand, and of existing United Nations bodies, on the other, should be defined in as much detail as possible. Pointless duplication and, consequently, additional expenditure, would be in the interest neither of the indigenous peoples nor of the United Nations.

5. In any event, Switzerland is in favour of the rapid establishment of a body of this nature at an appropriate level under the Economic and Social Council, as for example under the Commission on Human Rights, or at the same level as the Commission. Moreover, this new body constitutes, with the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, one of the two main specific objectives of the present Decade of the World's Indigenous People.